

115 Years After Fire First Fell on Bonnie Brae House, Glory Beckons From Azusa Street Revival

The glory still fills the room.

The sounds of floors and chairs creaking almost drowned out her softly spoken voice in the foyer she refers to as a living room. We all huddled around, listening, absorbing and quietly praying that the stories she spoke would become prophecies of things to come in our own lives. All this happened on a visit to 216 North Bonnie Brae Street in Los Angeles, California, on the eve of the 115th anniversary of the day when the glory fell on a small group of hungry believers seeking “the baptism” of the Holy Ghost—the famed Azusa Street Revival.

The voice we were listening to belonged to a saint known only as “Sister Sol.” She lived in the Bonnie Brae House for about 15 years during the late 1980s and 1990s and currently oversees its preservation. While the house is technically designated by the city as a museum, Sister Sol whispered, “We say it is a house of prayer.”

That very attitude and spirit of reverence and devotion have cultivated the atmosphere that permeates the Bonnie Brae House today. Pentecostal pioneer William Seymour would come to that house on an invitation to serve the people of Los Angeles and help bring the Pentecostal experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

The heavenly fire fell on April 9, 1906, when Seymour and a small group gathered and received the answer to their prayers. That heavenly fire burned brighter and brighter and drew crowds from around the world in hopes that they too would

experience the “new Pentecost” God was pouring out on His people. The small home on Bonnie Brae proved inadequate to host the meetings, so the revival moved to a simple building located on Azusa Street in Los Angeles that gave the revival its name.

One could not easily exaggerate the impact of that move of God as the inception of the modern Pentecostal and missions movement. More than 27% of Christians around the world draw their roots from that simple prayer meeting at Bonnie Brae.

But Sister Sol isn’t preoccupied with the past. She wants to share stories of what God is still doing, telling us of a heavenly fragrance that often fills the room and gold dust appearing on guests. Many of these guests are unbelievers, and she has been able to lead them in the sinner’s prayer to accept Jesus because of these signs and wonders.

In the early days of the revival, reports say local residents saw the house engulfed in flames, reporting the blaze to the local fire department. Many who cherish revival history are familiar with the tale. Sister Sol was emphatic in saying, “The fire hasn’t died out!” and goes on to say that in 2002, it happened again. A team from Argentina made the trek to Los Angeles and obtained permission to hold a prayer vigil through the night. Once again, flames were visible on the home, and fire trucks pulled up in haste to put out the fire. However, the only flames on the home however were the same as those that appeared on the disciples in Acts 2! When the firemen made their way into the home, they found no fire. Instead, they found an entire group of believers on their faces laboring in prayer under the glory of God.

The stories go on and on. Sister Sol tells of physical healings, deliverance from demons and even repentance of racism that has occurred in the house over the years.

“People come here to hear the stories. I say, encounter Jesus

and get your own stories. It's not the house; it's His presence."

Her gently spoken words fell like hammers upon our small group and incited a new longing that we would experience our own "fresh baptism" in our day. As we recognize what God did in that simple home and simple prayer meeting 115 years ago, it stands as a reminder that the same power and same Spirit are available for us today.

If you manage to schedule a time for a personal tour of 219 North Bonnie Brae Street, Sister Sol will be happy to show you the original piano that was used for the prayer meetings. She will lead you through the small rooms and point out where people tarried in prayer. She will highlight which lamp was original and even let you see Kathryn Kuhlman's original pulpit, which the house obtained at one point in its history.

Beyond all this, what she will want you to see is that the house stands as a reminder. God is no respecter of persons. He will use a humble and sincere heart to shake nations. What we honor from yesterday is actually an invitation for today: God is desiring to pour out His Spirit on all people, and it's time for His people to say "yes" to His desire once again.
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